

Montana State Senate



SENATOR ALAN OLSON
SENATE DISTRICT 23

HELENA ADDRESS:
PO BOX 200500
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0500
CAPITOL, RM 328
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

HOME ADDRESS:
18 HALFBREED CREEK
ROUNDUP, MT 59072
PHONE: (406) 323-3341

The Big Sky Country

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ENERGY AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS - CHAIRMAN
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February 10, 2012

The Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20554-0005

RE: Universal Service Fund, Docket No. 10-90

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

As you may know, a wireless carrier that provides service in Montana has filed a petition for reconsideration asking the FCC to structure "frozen" and "phase down" universal service support for wireless services based upon the most recent information available. I support this petition because basing support on the most recently available information is the most likely way to ensure that cell phone service in Montana will remain stable while the FCC works on its changes of the universal service system.

While not acting on behalf of the Committee, I am Chairman of the Energy and Telecommunications Committee in the Montana Senate. As a result of my committee membership, I am aware of the difficulties rural Montanans face in acquiring and maintaining adequate cell phone service. Montana is a very large and yet sparsely populated state, and many areas have no landline service at all. My senate district is 200 miles long and approximately 60 miles wide and yet contains only approximately 18,000 residents. Cell phone coverage is critical for communications purposes and for public safety.

Moreover, Montana is currently undergoing an oil and gas boom and much of that activity is located in areas dependent upon cell phone coverage. As a result, cell phone communication is absolutely critical to the economic development of our oil and gas resources in Montana.

Without support from the federal Universal Service system, it is likely that cell phone service will diminish in rural Montana, because the population levels do not justify installation, operation, and maintenance of the necessary infrastructure.

I urge you to consider that funding for cell phone service is necessary for continuation of service to consumers living or working in rural areas of Montana. This includes customers who subscribed to service in 2011. Annual average frozen funding for cellular services should not be determined based upon 2010 subscriber numbers. Since more recent data are available, I urge you to calculate "frozen" support for cell phone networks based upon the most recent information, as proposed in the petition for reconsideration from MTPCS, LLC d/b/a Cellular One.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Alan Olson", with a stylized, cursive script.

Alan Olson, Chairman
Energy and Telecommunications Committee

cc: Michael J. Copps, Commissioner
Robert M. McDowell, Commissioner
Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner
Meredith Attwell Baker, Commissioner
Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary